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SUBJECT: SECURITY COUNCIL INTEREST IN ZIMBABWE GROWING

Classified By: Ambassador Alejandro Wolff for Reasons 1.4 B/D.

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. UN Under Secretary-General Pascoe briefed Security Council members on April 29 on the situation in Zimbabwe, describing a pre-election period marked by threats of violence from government officials, a relatively open and fair elections process, and a post-election surge in government-encouraged violence against opposition MDC supporters. Pascoe conveyed the Secretary-General's readiness to lend his good offices in support of SADC and AU efforts to monitor the vote validation process and a runoff election if scheduled. Council members uniformly supported those SADC and AU efforts but differed significantly about whether the Council or Secretary-General should get directly involved. Several members called for a special envoy or fact finding mission, and several others (including all three African members) strongly opposed both ideas. Zimbabwe opposition leader Tendai Biti made a statement to the press on the margins of the Council session and later met with Ambassador Khalilzad and several Council members at USUN. In his press statement, Biti criticized SADC's performance, an opinion he shared in more detail during the USUN session, suggesting the AU and UN should become more directly involved and maintaining that the opposition was not inclined to participate in any runoff election the validation process were to call for. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) In April 29 briefing requested by the U.S. and UK among others, United Nations Under Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe described recent events in Zimbabwe to the Security Council in closed consultations (members only, no record). Pascoe said Zimbabwe officials -- including the commander of the army and the police commissioner -- had made clear prior to the election that they would not accept an opposition victory. Nevertheless, he said, the campaigns were reasonably open and international observers had pronounced the elections themselves to be credible. Prompt announcement of results in the parliament and assembly contests were followed by an extensive delay in announcing the presidential results that Pascoe said "poisoned the atmosphere and paralyzed the country" as the opposition claimed that the published results from more than 8,300 polling stations were easily tabulated and demonstrated a clear majority for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC).

¶3. (SBU) Pascoe described a post-election "surge in government-encouraged violence" targeting MDC supporters in rural areas and including "an orchestrated campaign of repression and retribution ... being carried out under the name 'Operation Where Did You Put Your X' - a campaign against those who marked ballots for the opposition." He reported MDC allegations that 200 people were arrested during a raid at its party headquarters, 15 MDC supporters killed, hundreds injured, and thousands forced to flee their homes. Pascoe also noted a statement by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour expressing concern "about reports of threats, intimidation, abuse and violence directed against

NGO's, election monitors, human rights defenders and other representatives of civil society."

14. (SBU) Pascoe concluded by conveying UN Secretary-General Ban's offer to lend his good offices to reinforce Southern African Development Community (SADC) and African Union (AU) efforts to contain the crisis in Zimbabwe, adding that "anything we do we do with SADC and the AU." Members invariably echoed this call for cooperation with the two African organizations. Several members (U.S., France, UK, Belgium, Italy, Panama) expressly called for a UN fact-finding mission to Zimbabwe. France and the UK suggested the Secretary-General might also consider naming a special envoy. UK and Costa Rica called for an arms embargo.

15. (SBU) Russia said a runoff election would only exacerbate the situation. China, Vietnam, Libya, Burkina Faso, and South Africa warned against UN intervention unless expressly requested by Zimbabwe or SADC/AU. South Africa PermRep Kumalo offered extensive and emotional commentary in which he sarcastically noted that SADC "has not asked for help" and ridiculed Commissioner Arbour for "reading newspaper articles and then expressing opinions." Kumalo said South Africa has expressed concern to Zimbabwe that the election results be made public as soon as possible. Noting that recounts to date had confirmed opposition victories, he urged members to await final results "like we are doing for Nepal to which no-one is talking about sending a fact-finding mission."

16. (SBU) MDC Secretary General Tendai Biti, after meeting privately with U/SYG Pascoe prior to the Council's consultations, took advantage of the press stakeout outside the Council chamber to address the media. In a later private meeting at USUN with Ambassador Khalilzad, Biti (accompanied

USUN NEW Y 00000404 002 OF 002

by MDC officials Wellington Chadehumbe and Eliphaz Mukonowesh) said he believed it had been very important that the Security Council discussion and subsequent press events had taken place, especially as a means of revealing the position of South Africa. Biti told the Ambassador that "today in the Council South Africa removed any little doubt we had." He said South Africa and PermRep Kumalo were "playing a dangerous game ... that had the ANC up in arms and South African unions ready to go beyond talking." He said that the MDC had already written to SADC to complain about "South Africa's biased facilitation" and that the MDC would consider participation in a "government of national healing" that included ZANU-PF as long as the "destabilizing" Mugabe was not included.

17. (C) In a follow-on meeting at USUN with several Council member representatives (UK, France, Belgium, Burkina Faso, Italy, Croatia, Panama), Biti continued his criticism of South Africa, calling President Mbeki "a defender of the (Zimbabwe) regime" and ridiculing SADC's statement that dialogue is underway between ZANU-PF and the MDC. On the contrary, he said 40-50 MDC supporters had been killed by government supporters since the election, 7,000 families had been displaced, every MDC office had become a refugee center, and the military is being deployed into civilian areas across Zimbabwe in order to influence any runoff election. Under these circumstances, Biti doubted MDC would agree to participate in a runoff. He said the vote verification should take a few people only a few hours with a calculator because it amounted to a simple process of tabulating the public results from 210 voting constituencies comprising more than 8,300 polling stations, something he said MDC had already done and which revealed on April 2 that MDC had initially won 50.3 percent of the presidential vote and had finally won 54.8 percent after all the isolated rural polling stations were included.

18. (C) Although disdainful of South Africa-led SADC efforts, he expressed confidence that the AU could "do what it did in Kenya" if SADC could be circumvented. When UK Deputy PermRep

Pierce asked how the AU might be persuaded to ask for UN assistance as had happened in Kenya, Mukonowesh replied that individual African states (he named Botswana, Zambia, and Tanzania) should be approached individually about approaching the AU directly.

19. (C) Italian PermRep Spatafora and Burkina Faso PermRep Kafando were surprised at Biti's comments about SADC, Spatafora saying, "The mantra in the Council has been 'SADC and AU together' and now we are told we are wasting our time with SADC." Biti agreed with Mukonowesh, adding, "You are better off approaching Kenya, Tanzania, even Gabon; there are enough African countries to drive the process. If these countries can get the AU to call a meeting, it would be hard to say we must wait for SADC." Koudougou said he had not intended to speak because he had no instructions from Ougadougou, but felt compelled to take the floor to agree with Italy's expression of surprise, adding that, "I have taken note of your comments about SADC and will inform my capital, which believes generally in taking problems to the regional organization and then to the AU." Ambassador Khalilzad closed out this session by telling Biti he was impressed by his concept of a "government of national healing" and by assuring Biti that "the U.S. will do all it can to respect the vote for change of the people of Zimbabwe." Khalilzad